



NATIONAL SKILLS AUTHORITY (NSA)

White paper For the Post School Education and Training (WP-PSET) and progress made to achieve the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III) goals

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Background and Progress

- There is unanimous agreement that skills development has a key role to play in addressing the triple challenges in South Africa of unemployment, poverty and inequality
- Urgent need to accelerate growth and equity in the context of an underperforming economy within a fragile global economy.
- There needs to be recognition of the fact that the multiplicity of rapidly changing policies, strategies, objectives and goals that impact on skills development results in the fact that the environment is becoming increasingly complex and difficult to manage.

Background and Progress

- In addition, there are inevitable tensions between government policy directives and the pressing needs of the various economic sectors.
- It is the intention of this presentation to illuminate the gains and the on-going challenges of realizing the intended outcomes of the NSDS III.

Imperatives of the WP – PSET

- WP PSET explicitly envisages a new role for the NSA going forward. It states:
- *A restructured and refocused National Skills Authority will concentrate specifically on monitoring and evaluating the SETAs. This implies that it will become an expert body with high-level monitoring and evaluation skills. (WP: Xvii/68)*
- There will be a need to have a close relationship between the NSA and the DHET with regards to the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the SETAs. In order to fully ensure efficiency of the skills system, the NSA will also oversee the establishment and running of a dedicated training facility whose primary task is to produce new cadres in skills development possessing the required skills to execute functions outlined in the White Paper for Post School Education and Training.

Imperatives of the WP – PSET

- The notion of an expanded and integrated post school system as outlined by the WP-PSET represents a fundamental shift that will ensure the fast-tracked production of the requisite skills to propel our economic growth. Going forward the National Skills Development Strategy will be informed by the overarching NDP and its implementing agencies the SETAs, will no longer be seen as separate from the colleges and universities as was the case in the past. The National Skills Authority (NSA) will continue to play a crucial role of ensuring stakeholders and constituency participation in the development of the new NSDS III and the SETA landscape beyond 2016. It has become evident that the department needs to consider aligning its legislative frameworks to support the integration of education and training and the national priorities of government.

Linking Education and the world of work

- The NSA will advocate and promote effective partnerships between institutions of learning and
- work places to facilitate the intake of graduates for internships and experiential learning. The DHET has developed a draft strategy in turning the Public Sector into a Training Space, working together, amongst others with the Department of Public Service and Administration. It is envisaged that clear targets for graduate work placement will be set and budgeted for by all spheres of government, state owned companies, and state agencies/entities etc, to ensure a strong bias to dedicated workplace based learning. In this regard, the SETAs should be seen as complementary institutions, enabling learners at learning institutions to seamlessly progress to workplaces and enabling workers to return to institutions of learning in ways that enhance economic growth and social development of the country. The White Paper states:

Linking Education and the world of work

- *In the future, SETAs (or their equivalent if they are restructured) will be given a clearer and to some extent narrower and more focused role. The aim will be to locate certain functions (such as skills planning, funding and quality assurance) in well-resourced central institutions, thus enabling sector structures to focus on engaging with stakeholders in the workplace, establishing their needs and agreeing on the best way of addressing them, facilitating access to relevant programmes and ensuring that providers have the capacity to delivery programmes that have a genuine impact. [WP: 57/8]*

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State Owned Enterprises (SOEs/SOCs) and the Public Service as a training space

- State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), now known as State Owned Companies (SOCs) have traditionally been the bedrock for the development of artisans in South Africa through the apprenticeship system under the now repealed Manpower Training Act. However, with privatization of companies such as ISCOR and Sasol and the commercialization of Transnet, SAA and others since the 1990s the numbers of apprentices indentured by the SOC's has gradually declined. In addition the infrastructure and equipment previously utilized by the SOC's for apprentice training has not been recapitalized or modernized and as a result the situation now exists that many of the SOC's need considerable investment to rejuvenate training and in particular artisan development through an apprenticeship system.

Progress made on achieving the NSDS III goals

- This current financial year marks the fifth and the last period/year of the NSDS III implementation. This implies that by now we should be able to confidently demonstrate the impact made by the eight objectives of the NSDS III. But given the insufficient or lack of the appropriate systematic and structural support that were supposed to have been in place for effective planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NSDS III, we have not fully taken advantage of the NSDS III. For an example the SETA outcomes in terms of achievement of qualitative targets cannot be neatly summarised within the NSDS III implementation period since learning programmes and projects often extend over a number of years. This means that evaluation of progress is often indicative of broad trends rather than quantitative exact information. Systemic weaknesses in reporting and analysis and the integrity of data reporting could create information gaps with regard to actual training delivery. As far as the role players are concerned, both the SETAs and the aligned institutions and support structures were at very different levels of readiness to implement strategies and initiatives.

Progress made on achieving the NSDS III goals

- The NSDS III also provides a framework for the planning and implementation of skills development programmes and activities consisting of:
 - **Seven Key Developmental and Transformation Imperatives** which provide the focus for skills development programmes and activities
 - **Seven Pillars** which offer a basis for the structuring of skills development programmes and activities.
 - **Eight HRDSSA Commitments** which inform and guide the NSDS III along with other relevant national and sector-specific government strategies, plans and programmes.
- The transfer of the skills development functions also impacted on the way in which the NSA, NSF and related SETA- and Skills Branches operated, with systems, processes and relationships needing to be re-established and new relationships established with the Human Resources Development Council of South Africa (HRDCSA). Additionally, the Provincial Skills Development Forums needed to be properly established which substantially increased the scope of the NSAs work, which together with the NSF, was/were already under-capacitated. Thus the transfer of the skills development function resulted not only in the simple movement of functions from the Department of Labour to the Department of Higher Education and Training, but also the complex overhaul of the entire skills development system.

Progress made on achieving the NSDS II goals

- Furthermore the NSDS III is a complex strategy consisting of 19 outcomes and 39 outputs, with each output consisting of several activities. The strategy also shifted from a targets-driven strategy under NSDS I and II, to an outcomes-driven strategy that relies on the delivery agents to set targets based on needs identified during the sector skills planning process. This shift in strategy, coupled with the need to establish new reporting systems under the DHET, has also resulted in several challenges regarding the current SETA data management processes. The data used for skills planning is often inconsistent and in some cases not valid which has led to unrealistic setting of targets as reflected in the substantial over-or under achievement of targets, making it difficult to understand the system's capacity to deliver skills development programmes.

Progress made on achieving the NSDS II goals

- It is recommended that the NSA implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to establish and determine the impact of the National Skills Accord and Youth Employment Accord. The inability of the Public Service and the Stakeholders to provide Workplace-based Experience for learners is an indictment on both Government departments and Industry. Public institutions and Government should be leading the way as examples to private industry by making budget allowances for the short-term absorption of learners. The inability of Industry and the Unions (who represent able and disabled workers) to accommodate Learners with Disabilities indicates that South Africa as an industrialised nation has not taken cognisance of the need for persons with disabilities to be economically active. Offices and factories have not made progress towards ensuring disability-friendly work centres as evidenced by their inability to offer disabled learners employment after training.

Goal 4.7: Increase public sector capacity for improved service delivery and supporting the building of a developmental state

- There have been significant advances in the transformation of the public service since 1994, particularly in relation to employment equity and redirection of services to meet the needs of the majority of South Africans. And whilst efforts have been made to increase the skills levels of public service managers, officials and workers alongside this transformation, the:
 - capacity of the public sector lags behind what is expected of it, and
 - role of the state in driving skills development has been below what is needed and inconsistent.
- These challenges have taken on renewed importance with the recognition by government for the need for a developmental state, capable of intervening in the economy for the purpose of building an inclusive growth path. This developmental approach, together with government priorities in regard to health, education and reducing crime, requires particular skills to be developed within government, and a skilled and capable public service that is able to deliver quality service efficiently.

Goal 4.7: Increase public sector capacity for improved service delivery and supporting the building of a developmental state

To address these challenges:

- Government departments will partner with relevant SETAs to:
- Ensure their skills needs are catered for in the SETA skills plans, and
- Develop opportunities for apprenticeships, ABET and high level skills development such as planning, environmental management and engineering.
- SETA plans must consider the needs of the government departments and entities that are engaged in economic and industrial planning within their respective sectors
- Goal 4.7 of the NSDS III therefore seeks to **increase public sector capacity for improved service delivery and supporting the building of a developmental state** by ensuring that:
- A thorough analysis and reflection is conducted on provision of education and training within the public sector and the contribution of the various role players (Outcome 4.7.1)
- Education and training plans for the public sector are revised and programmes are implemented to build capacity (Outcome 4.7.2)

Conclusion

- The co-ordination of skills development initiatives at policy and systems levels should be underpinned by strong and integrated support structures that have the capacity to make a fundamental difference to successful skills development implementation which is in the national interest to ensure future growth, prosperity and social inclusion in South Africa. I should think that the PSTF is strategically placed to catalyzed integration of skills development to ensure that the public service is a training space.
- Let me therefore conclude by inviting the PSTF to robustly engage in the review of the NSDS III and making sure that the identified challenges for the public service are taken care of.

THANK YOU

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